

Mr. Chairmen, members of the committee, for the record, my name is Joel Jahnke. I am the artistic director of Montana Shakespeare in the Parks located in Bozeman but serving the entire state of Montana. Given the abbreviated time available for testimony during this session, I am choosing to provide testimony via e-mail on HB 9 and specifically grant #1286 which will provide operational support for Shakespeare in the Parks.

I see this change as an attempt by the committee to streamline the process and I support your efforts. These grants receive much public scrutiny by the citizen's advisory panel in a process that is extremely fair, thorough and even-handed and historically the legislature has supported their recommendations. The opportunity to provide testimony in this way is appreciated particularly given the hazardous condition of the roads in the Bozeman area this morning.

In support of grant #1286, I would like to emphasize the following:

Shakespeare in the Parks has a long history of serving the entire state of Montana with a particular emphasis on under-served rural areas. From Libby to Ekalaka, Sydney to Dillon and many communities in between, we provide high quality live productions that are free to the public. Given the broad scope of our summer tour, these performances are available to any citizen who may chose to attend.

While the grant request represents a small percentage of our total budget, the Cultural and Aesthetic grant is critical to our overall budget strategy and allows us to keep the performance fees we charge local communities affordable, particularly in smaller towns.

We appreciate the kind and complimentary comments of the panel and the ranking we have received. We also appreciate their trust and confidence and urge the Long Range Building Committee to support their recommendation for funding.

Finally, I completely support the efforts of Montana Cultural Advocacy and others to find a way to increase the Cultural Trust so that funding levels can at least keep up with inflation. This is a critical funding source for many of Montana's cultural treasures and needs to be maintained.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in this way.

Joel Jahnke
Artistic Director
Montana Shakespeare in the Parks